Response of international community to India's 12-point peace package

291. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's 12 point peace package for normalizing relations with Pakistan announced by him on the 22nd October has been well received by the international community;

(b) if so, the reaction of major foreign powers, individually, in this regard;

(c) the reaction of Pakistan to the package, point by point; and

(d) the steps so far taken by Government for the implementation of the package?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Many countries including China, France, Japan, Russia, UK and US, have welcomed the series of measures announced by India on 22 October, 2003 that were aimed at promoting people to people contacts between India and Pakistan, and have expressed hope that these measures would lead to normalization and improvement of relations between the two countries.

(b) Pakistan's initial response on, 29 October, 2003 was inadequate. While welcoming some of the proposals, like allowing senior citizens to cross Wagah on foot; establishing links between Indian Coast Guards and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency; and resumption of bilateral sporting contacts, Pakistan opted to politicize the humanitarian gestures and attached impractical, extraneous and delaying conditions to others.

However, on 23 November 2003, Pakistan Prime Minister Jamali responded postively to the Indian proposals of 22nd October, and agreed to a number of measures. He also announced that Pakistan armed forces along the Line of Control (LoC) had been issued instructions to ceasefire along the LoC with effect from Eid-al-Fitr.

(d) Measures like increase in the size of respective High Commissions; allowing senior citizens to cross Wagah on foot; resumption of bilateral sporting contacts; and establishment of links between Indian Coast Guards and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency,

that have received positive response, are being implemented with immediate effect. India, on 24 November 2003, has welcomed the decision of the Government of Pakistan to work for expanding the communication links that were proposed on 22nd October, and proposed immediate technical level talks for early implementation of these proposals. The Director General Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two countries also agreed to observe ceasefire on the International Border, LoC and Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in Jammu and Kashmir with effect from the midnight of November 25, 2003.

Loss of Man-days

292. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the man-days lost due to strike has gone down subsequently;

(b) whether on the other hand, the man-days lost due to closure, lockout and lay offs, are in steep rise; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA): (a) to (c) According to information provided by the Labour Bureau, Shimla, man-days lost due to strikes increased from 55.63 lakhs in 2001 to 96.64 lakhs in 2002. During 2003 (January-September), man-days lost due to strikes were 18.73 lakhs.

Man-days lost due to lock-outs declined from 182.04 lakhs in 2001 to 169.21 lakhs in 2002 while man-days lost due to lay offs increased from 23.65 lakhs to 27.84 lakhs during the same period. During 2003 (January to September) man-days lost due to lock-outs and lay-offs were 197.95 lakhs and 14.04 lakhs respectively. There were no man-days lost due to closures.

Unemployment in the country

293. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether unemployment in the country is around 2 per cent;